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RETRIEVAL METHOD FOR INFORMATION AND INFORMATION STORAGE DEVICE

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Abstract

PURPOSE: To reduce retrieval leakage by performing retrieval by enlarging a retrieval character string essentially so as to compensate the incompletion of character recognition when a character string is retrieved from a character code obtained by performing character recognition on a document. CONSTITUTION:An information processing means 2 enlarges the range of the character string to be retrieved, and retrieves the character string that coincides with either the character strings whose range are enlarged as reading out character code information within a range instructed by s storage means 3. When the character string of document information inputted as image information is retrieved from the character code information to which the character recognition is applied in such way, the range can be enlarged essentially and the retrieval is performed by substituting the sum set of the character string and all the character strings with possibility to recognize the character string erroneously for the character string by referring to a correspondence table that is a table representing the tendency of erroneous recognition proper to the algorithm of character recognition. In such a way, it is possible to remarkably reduce the frequency of the retrieval leakage even when the erroneous recognition is performed by a character recognition means 5.

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情報の検索方法および情報蓄積装置

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1. 発明の名称

情報の検索方法および情報蓄積装置

- 2. 特許請求の範囲
- (1) 画像情報として入力された情報を文字認識 して得られた結果を蓄積した文字コード情報から 所定の条件式に合致した文字列を検索するときに 上記認識のアルゴリズムに固有の不完全性を捕う ように検索の範囲を拡大して検索することを特徴 とする情報書積装置のための情報の検索方法
- (2) 画像情報として入力される文書情報を蓄積 する画像蓄積手段と 上記文書情報に含まれる文 字を認識する認識手段と この認識手段から出力 されるコード情報を蓄積する補助情報蓄積手段と 検索範囲として入力される条件式に基づいて上記 補助情報蓄積手段に蓄積されたコード情報内で検 索する検索手段とを具備し

上記検索手段は 上記認識手段の不完全性を補 うように検索範囲を実質的に拡大して検索するこ とを特徴とする情報蓄積装置。

- (3)検索手段は 認識手段の認識のアルゴリズ ムに固有の誤認識の傾向に基づき、 各文字に対し てこれを誤認識し易い他の文字を対応づける対応 表を有し 検索条件式に含まれる文字列の各文字 を、この文字と、上記対応表で関連付けられた誤 認識し易い他の文字との和集合に置き換えて検索 することを特徴とする特許請求の範囲第2″項記載 の情報蓄積装置
- 3. 発明の詳細な説明

産業上の利用分野

本発明は 画像情報として入力される文書を電 子的に蓄積する情報蓄積装置と情報の検索方法に 関するものである。

従来の技術

近年 文書や図面を画像情報として入力してこ れを電子的に蓄積する文書ファイル装置と呼ばれ る情報蓄積装置が 文書や図面の管理を専業とす る部署を中心に普及し始めている。

以下、図面を参照しながら、上述した従来の情 報蓄積装置の一例について説明する。

第 5 図は従来の情報蓄積装置の動作を示すフローチャートである。 第 5 図 a)は文書の登録 時、 第 5 図 b)は検索時の動作をそれぞれ示すものである。 以上のように動作する情報蓄積装置について、 以下その動作をさらに詳しく説明をする。

まず、文書を登録するときには、イメージスキャナなどの画像入力装置で、文書情報を画光ディとして取り込む、取り込んだ画像情報は光で、スク装置などの記憶装置に書積される。 読い 二十二 ではどの検索に利用する補助情報をキーボの はいい この補助情報に対応する画像情報を示す情報を付加して所定の場所に記憶する。

このようにして書積された画像情報を検索するときには、キーボードから補助情報を限定する検索条件を入力し、所定の場所に記憶された補助情報の中でこれに合致する補助情報を検索する。このようにして検索しようとする文書情報の補助情報が特定されると、これに対応する文書を読み出すことができる。(例えば、オーム社「オフィス

付随する不完全性のためにこの文字列を誤認識する可能性のある他の文字列と正しい文字列のいずれかに合致する文字列を検索するようにしたものである。

作用

本発明は上記した方法によって、文書の画像情報を文字認識して得られる文字コード情報に存って、文書情報に存って、文書情報に存って、文書情報に存ってあり、文書情報から検索することが可能であり、文字認識に伴う検索漏れを回避することが可能となる。

認識の不完全性を補う方法について、 その原理 をさらに説明する。

第3図は 理想的に文字認識できる場合を示す概念図である。 同図において、実験で囲んだ領域 a~領域 h は、それぞれ、仮想的な文字 a~文字 hのパターンの存在範囲を示すもので、 破験で囲んだ領域 A~領域 B は、それぞれ、文字 a ~文字

オートメーション入門」!!! ~ ! 1 3 ページ)

発明が解決しようとする課題

しかしながら上記のような動作では、文書を登まするときに必ず検索のための補助情報を入力する必要があり、登録に手間がかかるばかりするくと、複数の人で文書を登録したり検索したりするときには、各人の間でキーワード体系の管理が大変をとる必要もあり、キーワード体系の管理が大変であるという問題点を有していた。

本発明は上記問題点に鑑み 文書を登録するときに、検索のための補助情報をわざわざ入力しなくても後で検索することが可能な情報の検索方法および情報蓄積装置を提供するものである。

課題を解決するための手段

上記課題を解決するために 本発明の情報の検索方法および情報審積装置は 画像情報として入力される文書情報から文字を認識した文字コード情報から所定の文字列を検索しようとするもので、検索すべき文字列を含む文書の画像情報からこの文字列を認識するとま、認識のアルゴリズムに

トと認識されるパターンの範囲を示すものである。 この場合には、領域 a ~領域 h は、それぞれ、領域 A ~領域 H に完全に包含されており、文字 a ~文字 h がすべて正しく認識されることは明らかである。

 パターンの領域が重なっており、文脈などから意味を理解するような、パターン認識以外の手段を併用する以外に誤認識を避ける方法はない。このようなことは、異なる文字体系が混在する場合におこり得るものである。例えば、漢字の「)、とアルファベットの「)、などがその任例である。

以上のように構成された情報書積装置について、 以下 第1図および第2図を用いてその動作を説明する。

まず、第2図は本実施例における情報書積装置の動作のフローチャートを示したものであって、第2図a)は、文書情報を蓄積する場合をそれぞれ、示すものである。文書情報を養素する場合をそれぞれ、示すものである。文書情報を蓄積するときには、まず、手書きあるいは印刷さた文書を、イメージスキャナのような画像人力手段1で画像情報とし

わせた熟語で検索されるので、検索範囲は実質的にはそれほど極端に拡大されることはない。例えば、「入力」という文字列で検索する場合、「入」という文字を「入+」」に、「力」を「力+」」にそれぞれ拡大しても、文字列としては「入力+」に カ+入カ+」がに拡大されるだけで、「入力・」、「入力」、「入力」などはほとんど存在しないので、実質的な検索範囲の拡大は極わずかとなる。

このように 検索時に文字認識の不完全性を補 うことによって、検索漏れという不都合な事態を 大幅に減少させることが可能となる。

実施 例

以下本発明の一実施例の情報の検索方法につい て、図面を参照しながら説明する

第1図は本発明の第1の実施例における情報蓄積装置のブロック図を示すものである。第1図において、1は画像入力手段で、手書きあるいは印刷された文書から画像として情報を取り込む。2は情報処理手段で情報の入出力の制御やさまざまな処理を行う。3は記憶手段で、情報処理手段

以上のようにして書積された文書情報から、所望の情報を検索するときには、まず、検索を行う対象とするファイルを限定するために必要に応じてキーワードなどによる制限条件をコード入力手段4から入力する。 もちろん すべてのファイル

表 1

を対象にするときには このような制限条件の入力は必要としない 次に 検索すべき文字列を再びコード入力手段 4 から入力する。この文字列は情報処理手段 2 に転送され 情報処理手段 2 は内蔵する対応表に基づいて この文字列の範囲を拡大する。過程をさらに詳しく説明する。

対応表とは 文字認識手段 5 が名文字を 認識するときに誤認識する可能性の ある文字 を 名文字 に対応させた表である。例えば、第3 図に示すように、文字i ~文字p のパターンの範囲および文字i ~文字p と認識されるパターンの範囲である領域 I ~領域 P が分布しているとすれば、これらの文字に関する対応表は表1 のようになる。

(以下余白)

'文字 j 文字 m 文字 o'

'文字 j 文字 m 文字 m'

'文字 n 文字 m 文字 o '

'文字 n 文字 m 文字 m'

'文字? 文字丽文字 0'

'文字? 文字m文字m'

以上のように本実施例によれば、 画像情報として入力された文書情報を文字認識した文字コード情報から文字列を検索すると き、文字認識のアルゴリズムに固有の誤認識の傾向を表すテーブルで

文字i	文字 i.	文字 j.	文字n
文字;	文字 j.	文字 n,	文 字?
文字k	文字k		
文字)	文字丨		
文字m	文字m		
文字n	文字n		
文字。	文字 o,	文字m	
文字p	文字p		

この対応表は、実際にはそれぞれの文字を表す文字コードで構成されており、文字? は 認識できなかった文字に割り当てる特殊コードを意味する

検索する文字列が「文字」文字m文字の「の3 文字から成る文字列であるとすれば、文字」は 文字」と文字nと文字?との和集合に置き換え 文字のは文字のと文字mとの和集合に置き換える。 したがって、検索は

ある対応表を参照して、上記文字列を、この文字列とこれを誤認識する可能性のあるすべての文字列との和集合に置き換えることによって、実質的に範囲を拡大して検索することにより、例え文字認識手段 5 が誤認識しても、検索漏れの頻度を大幅に減少させることができる。

発明の効果

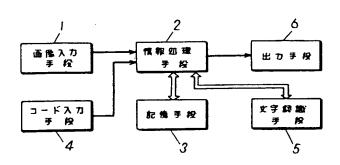
以上のように本発明は 文書を文字認識して得

られた文字コードから文字列を検索するとも、文字認識の不完全性を補うように検索の文字列を実質的に拡大して検索することによって、検索漏れの頻度を大幅に減少させることができる。

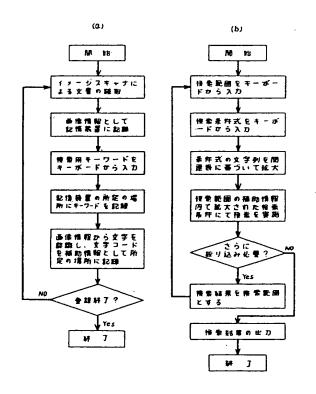
4. 図面の簡単な説明

第1図は本発明の一実施例における情報蓄積装置のブロック図 第2図は上記実施例における情報蓄積装置の動作を示すフローチャート 第3図は理想的な文字認識の場合を示す概念図 第4図は不完全な文字認識の場合を示す概念図 第5図は従来の情報蓄積装置の動作を示すフローチャートである。

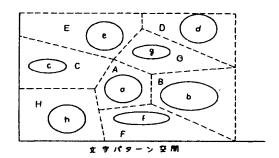
第 1 図



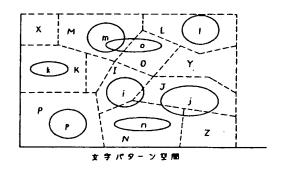
第 2 図



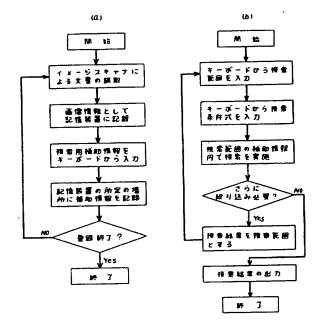
第 3 図



第 4 図



新 5 図



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SPECIFICATION

- 1. Title of the Invention Information Retrieval Method and Information Storage Apparatus
- 2. Scope of Claims

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- (1) An information retrieval method for an information storage apparatus wherein when a character string matching a predetermined condition equation is retrieved from stored character code information obtained through recognition of characters input as image information, a retrieval range is broadened in order to compensate for incompleteness inherent in a character recognition algorithm.
- (2) An information storage apparatus comprising: image storage means for storing document information input as image information; recognition means for recognizing characters contained in the document information; auxiliary information storage means for storing code information output from said recognition means; and retrieval means 20 for retrieving the code information in accordance with a condition equation input as a retrieval range, wherein said retrieval means retrieves the code information by broadening a substantial retrieval range so that incompleteness of said recognition means can be compensated.
- 25 (3) An information storage apparatus according to claim 2, wherein said retrieval means has a table storing a correspondence between each character and another character or characters easy to be erroneously recognized

from the first mentioned character, the table being formed in accordance with erroneous recognition tendency inherent in a recognition algorithm to be used by said recognition means, and said retrieval means retrieves a character string contained in the retrieval condition equation as a sum-set of each character of the character string and the other character or characters which are easy to be erroneously recognized from the first mentioned character and are related by the correspondence table.

10 3. Detailed Description of the Invention

Industrial Application Field

The present invention relates to an information storage apparatus for electronically storing a document input as image information and to an information retrieval method.

15 Related Art

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An information storage apparatus called a document filing apparatus for electronically storing documents and drawings input as image information in prevailing in business departments which mainly manage documents and drawings.

With reference to the accompanying drawings, an example of a conventional information storage apparatus will be described.

Fig. 5 is a flow chart illustrating the operation of a conventional information storage apparatus. Fig. 5(a) illustrates a document registration operation, and Fig. 5(b) illustrates a document retrieval operation.

The operation of the information storage apparatus operating as illustrated in Figs. 5(a) and 5(b) will be

detailed hereinunder.

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When a document is registered, document information is captured as image information by using an image input apparatus such as an image scanner. The captured image information is stored in a storage device such as an optical disc. Next, auxiliary information to be used for retrieval, such as the document name, classification, author and keywords respectively of the stored image information, is input from a keyboard. The auxiliary information and information representative of the image information are stored in the storage device at a predetermined location.

When the image information stored in the storage device is retrieved, a retrieval condition for identifying the auxiliary information is input from the keyboard to retrieve the auxiliary information stored in the storage device and matching the retrieval condition. After the auxiliary information of the document information to be retrieved is retrieved, the corresponding document can be read (for example, refer to "Office Automation Guide" Ohm Co. pp. 111-113).

Problems to be Solved by the Invention

With the above operation, however, it is essential to enter the auxiliary information for retrieval when a document is registered. It takes labor to register a document. Furthermore, if a plurality of persons register and retrieve documents, it is necessary to have integrity and consistency of keywords used by those persons.

Management of a keyword system becomes complicated.

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Under the circumstances of such problems, the invention provides an information retrieval method and an information storage apparatus capable of retrieving a document without entering auxiliary information for retrieval when the document is registered.

Means for Solving the Problems

In order to solve the above problems, according to the retrieval method and information storage apparatus of the invention, a desired character string is retrieved from character code information obtained through recognition of characters of a document input as image information, wherein when the character string to be retrieved is recognized from the image information of the document, a character string matching either a target correct character string or another character string or strings having a possibility of being erroneously recognized from the target correct character string because of incompleteness of a recognition algorithm.

Operation

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According to the information retrieval method of the invention, a desired character string is recognized from character code information obtained through character recognition of a document input as image information.

Accordingly, a character string can be retrieved directly from the document information without adding retrieval auxiliary information such as keywords to the document information. Since a retrieval condition is broadened in order to compensate for incompleteness of character

recognition, it is possible to avoid a retrieval omission by erroneous recognition.

The principle of a method of compensating for incompleteness of recognition will be described.

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Fig. 3 is a conceptual diagram illustrating ideal character recognition. In Fig. 3, areas a to h surrounded by solid lines indicate existence areas of patterns of virtual characters a to h, respectively. Areas A to H surrounded by broken lines indicate areas of patterns recognized as the characters a to h, respectively. Since the areas a to h are completely included in the areas A to H, respectively, it is obvious that the characters a to h are all recognized correctly.

Fig. 4 is a conceptual diagram illustrating the case that characters are not recognized correctly. Similar to Fig. 3, areas i to p surrounded by solid lines indicate existence areas of patterns of virtual characters i to p, respectively. Areas I to P surrounded by broken lines indicate areas of patterns recognized as the characters i to p, respectively. No character is recognized from areas X to Z. In this example shown in Fig. 4, all characters i to p are not completely included in the areas I to P so that perfect character recognition is impossible. For example, although the character i is recognized as the character i in some cases, if the character i is written by patterns similar to character j or n, the character i is erroneously recognized as the character j or n. The patterns of characters m and O are overlapped so that

erroneous recognition is inevitable unless means other than the pattern recognition, such as recognition of meaning from the context of a passage, is used together with the pattern recognition. Such a case occurs if different character systems are used. Typical examples are a kanji character "入" and a Greek character ".", and a numeral "O" and an alphabet "O".

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There is a tendency inherent in a recognition algorithm that such erroneous recognition occurs at which character in what manner. If this tendency can be grasped, such deficiency can be compensated during retrieval. Consider for example that the character i is erroneously recognized as the character j. In this case, although it is not suitable for printing or displaying, a search omission can be avoided if characters (i + j + n) are searched at the same time. If the search range is broadened, unnecessary characters are retrieved. However, if the retrieval condition is narrowed down there is no practical problem. In practice, retrieval using one character hardly occurs and retrieval using a compound word made of a combination of several characters is usually performed. Therefore, the retrieval range is not substantially broadened too much. Consider for example that a character string "入力" is retrieved. In this case, if the character "入" is broadened to "入 + λ " and the character "力" is broadened to "力 + \mathfrak{h} ", the character string is broadened to "入力 +入力+入力". However, in this case, "入力", "入力", "入力" and the like hardly exist so that a substantial extension of the retrieval range

is very small.

As above, by compensating for incompleteness of character recognition during retrieval, search omissions can be reduced considerably.

5 Embodiment

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An information retrieval method according to an embodiment of the invention will be described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

Fig. 1 is a block diagram showing an information storage apparatus according to a first embodiment of the invention. In Fig. 1, an image input unit 1 captures images of a hand-written or printed document. An information processing unit 2 performs information input/output control and various processes. A storage device 3 stores, when necessary, information to be used by the information processing unit 2. A code input unit 4 inputs auxiliary information of the image information input from the image input unit 1, a character string to be retrieved, and the like. A character recognition unit 5 cuts characters off the image information supplied from the image processing unit 2, recognizes them, and returns the obtained character codes back to the information processing unit 2. An output unit 6 outputs specific information designated by the inputs of the input unit 4, information retrieved and extracted in accordance with the inputs of the input unit 4, and other information. The operation of the information storage apparatus constructed as above will be described with reference to Figs. 1 and 2.

Fig. 2 is a flow chart illustrating an operation of the information storage apparatus of the embodiment. Fig. 2(a) illustrates a document registration operation, and Fig. 2(b) illustrates a document retrieval operation. When a hand-written or printed document is registered, the document is read with the image input unit 1 such as an image scanner as image information. The image information is transferred to the information processing unit 2. The information processing unit 2 changes the format 10 of the image information and transfers the image information to the storage device 3 to be stored as a file. When necessary, auxiliary information such as a keyword is entered from the code input unit 4. The information processing unit 2 changes the format of the auxiliary information and 15 transfers the auxiliary information to the storage device 3 to be stored at a predetermined location. The information processing unit 2 also transfers the image information to the character recognition unit 5 which sequentially cuts characters from the image information, recognizes them and converts them into character codes. The character 20 recognition unit 5 returns the recognized and obtained character codes to the information processing unit 2. The information processing unit 2 changes the character code information to have a predetermined format, and sends the character code information to the storage device 3 25 to be stored at a predetermined location.

In retrieving desired information from the document information registered in the above manner, first, a

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limitation condition is input from the code input unit 4 in order to limit a retrieval target file. The limitation condition may be written by a keyword. This limitation condition is not entered if all files are used as retrieval target files. Next, a character string to be retrieved is input from the code input unit 4. This character string is transferred to the information processing unit 2. In accordance with a correspondence table in the information processing unit 2, the information processing unit 2 broadens the range of the character string. A process of broadening the range of a character string will be described more in detail.

The correspondence table is a table storing a correspondence between each character and a corresponding character or characters having a possibility of being erroneously recognized as the first mentioned character by the character recognition unit 5. Assuming that the areas of patterns of the characters i to p and the areas I to P of patterns recognized as the characters i to p, are distributed as shown in Fig. 4, the correspondence table for these characters is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

,	Character i	Character i, Character j, Character n
	Character j	Character j, Character n, Character ?
25	Character k	Character k
	Character l	Character l
'	Character m	Character m
	Character n	Character n
	!	\

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Character o, Character m	
Character p Character p	

This correspondence table is really written by a character code of each character. The character ? means a special code to be assigned to a character not recognized.

If a character string to be retrieved is "character j + character m + character o" of three characters, the character j is replaced with a sum-set of characters j, n and ? and the character o is replaced with a sum-set of characters o and m.

Therefore, the retrieval is performed by using a sum-set of six character strings:

"characters j, m and o"

"characters j, m and m"

"characters n, m and o"

"characters n, m and m"

"characters ?, m and o"

"characters ?, m and m"

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In the above manner, the information processing unit 2 broadens the range of the character string to be retrieved. The information processing unit 2 reads the character code information in the designated range from the storage device 3d to retrieve the character string matching any one of the character strings in the broadened range. The information processing unit 2 transfers the retrieved and extracted document information to the output unit 6. If

the output unit 6 is a CRT, the document information is displayed thereon, or if the output unit 6 is a printer, the document information is printed out.

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As above, according to this embodiment, in retrieving a character string from character code information obtained through character recognition of document information input as image information, the target character string is replaced with a sum-set of the target character string and all character strings having a possibility of being erroneously recognized as the target character string, by referring to the correspondence table indicating a tendency of erroneous recognition inherent in a character recognition algorithm. In this manner, since the retrieve is performed by substantially broadening the retrieval range, even if the character recognition unit 5 erroneously recognizes a character, the occurrence frequency of retrieval omissions can be reduced considerably.

In the above embodiment, the retrieval target character string is replaced with a sum-set of the target character string and all other character strings likely to be erroneously recognized, by referring to the correspondence table. According to the main aspect of the invention, if character codes obtained by character recognition are used by retrieval only, erroneous recognition does not pose a serious problem on the assumption that recognition incompleteness is compensated. From this point of view, the range of the character string to be retrieved is substantially broadened to compensate for the recognition

incompleteness. Means for substantially broadening the range of a character string to be retrieved is therefore not limited to a particular means.

Effects of the Invention

As described so far, according to the invention, in retrieving a character string from character codes obtained through character recognition of a document, the range of the character string is substantially broadened so as to compensate for the character recognition incompleteness, so that an occurrence frequency of retrieval omissions can be reduced considerably.

4. Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a block diagram of an information storage apparatus according to an embodiment of the invention,

Fig. 2 is a flow chart illustrating the operation of the information storage apparatus of the embodiment, Fig. 3 is a conceptual diagram illustrating ideal character recognition, Fig. 4 is a conceptual diagram illustrating incomplete character recognition, and Fig. 5 is a flow chart illustrating the operation of a conventional information storage apparatus.

2...information processing unit, 3... storage device,4... code input unit, 5... character recognition unit.Name of Agent: Attorney Akira KOKAJI and two others

FIG. 1

IMAGE INPUT UNIT, 2... INFORMATION PROCESSING UNIT,
 STORAGE DEVICE, 4... CODE INPUT UNIT, 5... CHARACTER
 RECOGNITION UNIT, 6... OUTPUT UNIT

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FIG. 2

(1)...START, (2)... READ DOCUMENT WITH IMAGE SCANNER, (3)... STORE DOCUMENT IN STORAGE DEVICE AS IMAGE INFORMATION, (4)... ENTER RETRIEVAL KEYWORD FROM KEYBOARD, (5)... STORE 10 KEYWORD IN STORAGE DEVICE, (6)... RECOGNIZE CHARACTERS FROM IMAGE INFORMATION AND STORE CHARACTER CODES IN STORAGE DEVICE AT PREDETERMINED LOCATION AS AUXILIARY INFORMATION, (7)... REGISTRATION COMPLETED ?, (8)... ENTER RETRIEVAL RANGE FROM KEYBOARD, (9)... ENTER RETRIEVAL CONDITION FROM 15 KEYBOARD, (10)... BROADEN CHARACTER STRING IN CONDITION EQUATION BY USING CORRESPONDENCE TABLE, (11)... RETRIEVE BY BROADENED RETRIEVAL CONDITION AND AUXILIARY INFORMATION IN RETRIEVAL RANGE, (12)... NARROW DOWN RETRIEVE RANGE ?, (13)... SET RETRIEVAL RESULT TO RETRIEVAL RANGE, (14)... 20 OUTPUT RETRIEVE RESULT, (15)... END

FIG. 5

(1)...START, (2)... READ DOCUMENT WITH IMAGE SCANNER, (3)...
STORE DOCUMENT IN STORAGE DEVICE AS IMAGE INFORMATION,

(4)... ENTER RETRIEVAL AUXILIARY INFORMATION FROM KEYBOARD,

(5)... STORE AUXILIARY INFORMATION IN STORAGE DEVICE AT PREDETERMINED LOCATION, (6)... REGISTRATION COMPLETED ?,

(7)... ENTER RETRIEVAL RANGE FROM KEYBOARD, (8)... ENTER

RETRIEVAL CONDITION FROM KEYBOARD, (9)... RETRIEVE BY AUXILIARY INFORMATION IN RETRIEVAL RANGE, (10)... NARROW DOWN RETRIEVE RANGE?, (11)... SET RETRIEVAL RESULT TO RETRIEVAL RANGE, (12)... OUTPUT RETRIEVE RESULT, (13)... END

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特開率4-158478 (5)

第 1 図

FIG. 1

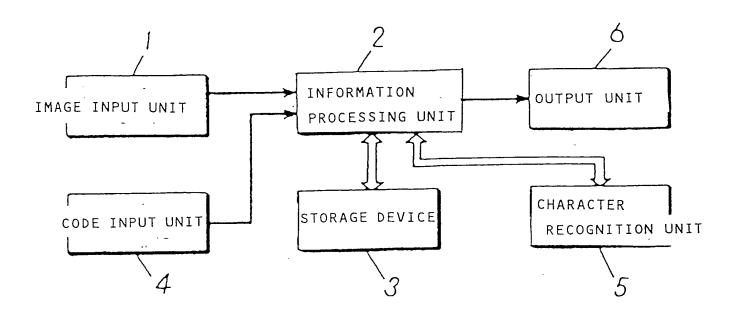


FIG. 2

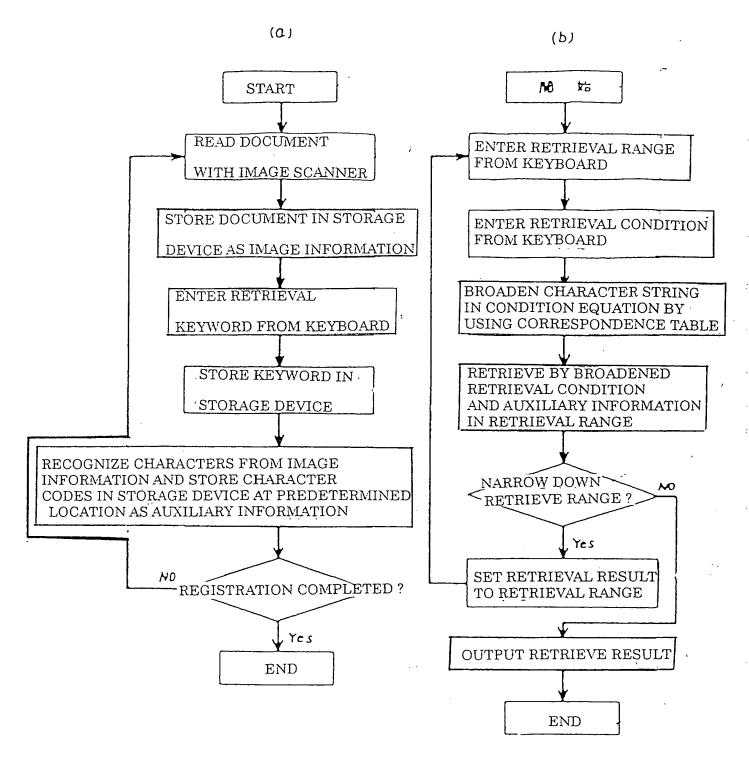
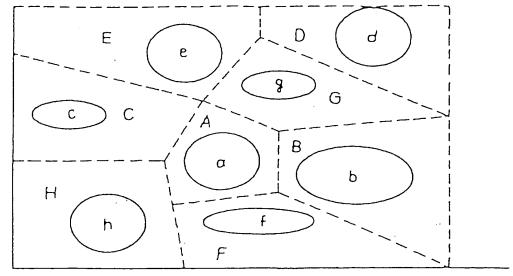


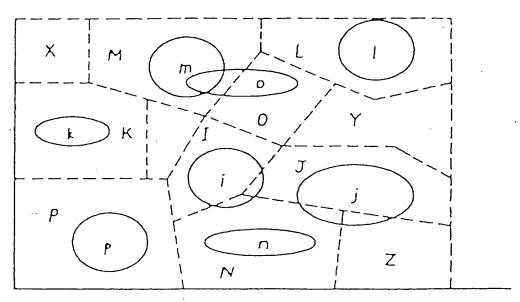
FIG. 3



CHARACTER PATTERN SPACE

第 4 図

FIG. 4



CHARACTER PATTERN SPACE

FIG. 5

